

THE BIG FOUR

A Mystery-Romance by Agatha Christie

CHAPTER XI
Mrs. Halliday received us at once, a tall, fair woman, nervous and eager in manner. With her was her little girl, a beautiful child of five.

Poirot explained the purpose of our visit.
"Oh! Monsieur Poirot, I am so glad, so thankful. I have heard of you, of course. You will not be like these Scotland Yard people, who will not listen or try to understand. And the French police are just as bad—worse, I think. They are all convinced that my husband has gone off with some other wo-

man. But he wasn't like that! All he thought of in life was his work. Half our quarrels came from that. He cared for it more than he did for me."
"Englishmen, they are like that," said Poirot soothingly. "And if it is not work, it is the games, the sport. All these things they take so very seriously. Now, madame, recount to me exactly, in detail, and as methodically as you can, the exact circumstances of your husband's disappearance."

"My husband went to Paris on Thursday, the 20th of July. He was to meet and visit various peo-

ple there connected with his work, amongst them Madame Olivier."

Poirot nodded at the mention of the famous French woman chemist, who had eclipsed even Madame Curie in the brilliance of her achievements. She had been decorated by the French government, and was one of the most prominent personalities of the day.

"He arrived there in the evening and went at once to the Hotel Castiglione in the Rue de Castiglione. On the following morning, he had an appointment with Professor Bourgogneau, which he kept. His manner was normal and pleasant. The two men had a most interesting conversation, and it was arranged that he should witness some experiments in the professor's laboratory on the following day. He lunched alone at the Cafe Royal, went for a walk in the Bois, and then visited Madame Olivier

at her house at Passy. There, also, his manner was perfectly normal. He left about six. Where he dined is not known, probably alone at some restaurant. He returned to the hotel about eleven o'clock and went straight up to his room, after inquiring if any letters had come for him. On the following morning, he walked out of the hotel, and has not been seen again."

"At what time did he leave the hotel? At the hour when he would normally leave it to keep his appointment at Professor Bourgogneau's laboratory?"

"We do not know. He was not remarked leaving the hotel. But no petit-dejeuner was served to him, which seems to indicate that he went out early."

"Or he might, in fact, have gone out again after he came in the night before?"

"I do not think so. His bed had been slept in, and the night porter would have remembered any one going out at the hour."

"A very just observation, madame. We may take it, then, that he left early on the following morning—and that is reassuring from one point of view. He is not likely to have fallen a victim to any Apache assault at that hour. His baggage, now, was it all left behind?"

"Mrs. Halliday seemed rather reluctant to answer, but at last she said:—

"No—he must have taken one small suitcase with him."

"If so," said Poirot thoughtfully, "I wonder where he was that evening. If we knew that, we should know a great deal. Whom did he meet?—there lies the mystery. Madame, myself I do not of necessity accept the view of the police; with them is it always, 'Chercher la femme.' Yet it is clear that something occurred that night to alter your husband's plans. You say he asked for letters on returning to the hotel. Did he receive any?"

"One only, and that must have been the one I wrote him on the day he left England."

Poirot remained sunk in thought for a full minute, then he rose briskly to his feet.

"Well, madame, the solution of the mystery lies in Paris, and to find it I myself journey to Paris on the instant."

"It is all a long time ago, monsieur."

"Yes, yes. Nevertheless, it is there that we must seek."

He turned to leave the room, but paused with his hand on the door.

"Tell me, madame, do you ever remember your husband mentioning the phrase, 'The Big Four'?"

"The Big Four," she repeated thoughtfully. "No, I can't say I do."

That was all that could be elicited from Mrs. Halliday. We hurried back to London, and the following day saw us en route for the continent. With rather a rueful smile, Poirot observed:—

"This Big Four, they make me to hestir myself, mon ami. I run up and down, all over the ground, like our old friend 'the human foxhound.'"

"Perhaps you'll meet him in Paris," I said, knowing that he referred to a certain Giraud, one of the most trusted detectives of the Surete, whom he had met on a previous occasion.

Poirot made a grimace. "I devoutly hope not. He loved me not, that one."

"Won't it be a very difficult task?" I asked. "To find out what an unknown Englishman did on an evening two months ago?"

"Very difficult, mon ami. But, as you know well, difficulties rejoice the heart of Hercule Poirot."

"You think the Big Four kidnapped him?"

Poirot nodded.

(To be continued)

YANKS, GIANTS GET WORLD SERIES COIN

NEW YORK, Oct. 23.—(AP)—Although they lost the world series, the New York Giants will be consoled with \$4,555.59 for each player who was assigned a full share of the world series money. The victorious Yankees are collecting \$6,420.00 apiece. The losers' shares are record "cuts" of the largest world series "gate" on record, while the Yanks came close to the record for a winning team.

The official figures were announced yesterday when Baseball Commissioner K. M. Landis mailed

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HUSKIES LOOK LIKE GRIDSTERS TO BEAT

Conference Spotlight Hits Battle With Bears at Seattle Saturday.

SAN FRANCISCO, Oct. 23.—(AP)—Washington's powerful Huskies swing the Pacific coast conference spotlight to Seattle tomorrow where they battle once-beaten California while at Palo Alto Southern California risks its championship chances against a rejuvenated band of Stanford Indians.

The Huskies, who have displayed well-balanced ground and aerial attacks in downing U. C. L. A. and Oregon state in impressive fashion, remain the team to beat for the coast title.

California's championship hopes suffered a severe setback last Saturday when they lost 17 to 6 to U. C. L. A. and several practice injuries make the outlook none too bright. The Bears have drilled all week on defense against passes, the weapon the Bruins used so effectively Saturday.

Stanford's Indians have practiced secretly two weeks since tying Oregon, 7 to 7, and Coach Claude "Tiny" Thornhill's new plays and formations are calculated to surprise U. S. C. Trojan stock dropped several points Saturday in a scoreless tie game with W. S. C., which none out Stanford, 14 to 13, three weeks ago.

Their future brighter after the U. S. C. affair, Washington state's Cougars take the field at Eugene against University of Oregon, fresh from a 13 to 0 triumph over Idaho.

At Los Angeles, U. C. L. A.'s Bruins figure on an easy victory over Oregon State. In the conference cellar with three defeats, The Beavers showed spurts of power Saturday though they were downed, 19 to 7, by Washington.

Idaho tackles the Grizzlies of Nevada at Reno while at Butte, Montana and Montana State square off in their traditional civil war.

ed the cheeks to 36 Yankees and 32 Giants as well as the members of the second, third and fourth place clubs in each league.

The total receipts were \$1,394,329, including the \$100,000 from the sale of radio rights. The players' pool, drawn from the receipts of the first four games and a pro rata share of the radio money, was \$460,002.66. Both figures were new financial records for a world series.

Of this a total of \$193,201.12 went to the Yanks and \$128,800.74 to the Giants. Each club awarded 27 full shares plus various minor "cuts."

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